

LISA SCHMIDT

missing in action

**Her badly beaten body turned up in a warehouse yesterday. Her boyfriend is being held for questioning.**

**— Overheard on a Toronto radio station on thanksgiving weekend**

I've always wondered if you see a room in slow  
motion  
as you are thrown across it

as you sink to your knees screaming STOP  
STOP IT  
to a man who says he loves you

I'm thinking about your birth now  
when you sprang into this world  
alive, your eyes casting light into the  
sterilized hospital room  
your mother smiling a smile that would one day  
be yours

then four, in your pink shoes  
pushing baby carriages  
putting your dolls and stuffed animals  
in your bed at night  
sleeping on the floor

then fourteen, and drinking too much  
time on your hands like fingerprints  
floating through school waiting  
for weekends  
waiting to shed your snakey virginity  
and tell your friends how you felt in his arms

your body turned up, they said  
did they mean facing the stars  
your last breath in a warehouse  
with a man who said he loved you

I want to believe  
these things couldn't happen to me  
to anyone I know  
but I remember once, a man  
who said he loved me  
I spent four years watching walls  
pass my eyes

there's something about seeing a room  
in slow motion  
and seeing the picture of a woman  
tire tracks black across her chest

I remember learning as a child that my heart  
was  
the same size as my fist  
I wonder why so many men love with fists  
instead of hearts

I wasn't trying to kill her  
the boyfriend is saying to police

what is it like hearing  
your skull as it hits the pavement  
as your kidneys cushion a blow  
from a boot

what does I love you sound like  
when you're lying in the morgue

*Lisa Schmidt is a poet and freelance book reviewer. Her work has appeared in Paragraph, Our Times, Prairie Fire.*